United Nations A/54/450

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 October 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 164
Human resources management

Human resources management

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the reports of the Secretary-General on the following subjects: competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories (A/C.5/54/2); hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat (A/54/164); consultants and individual contractors (A/C.5/54/4); administrative issuances on delegation of authority (A/54/257); and amendments to the Staff Regulations (A/54/276). During the consideration of the reports, representatives of the Secretary-General provided additional information.

Competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories

2. The note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/54/2 is in response to section V, paragraph 22, of General Assembly resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999, by which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to complete the realignment with the national competitive examination of the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category and above of staff members from other categories (G to P exam), in particular regarding academic qualifications and equitable geographical distribution, as well as equal treatment with regard to probationary appointments.

3. The Advisory Committee points out that the statement in paragraph 2 of the note, referring to the request of several delegations, is not in keeping with past practice whereby formal submissions of the Secretary-General are produced in response to decisions of legislative bodies and/or their subsidiary organs rather than requests of individual Members. That notwithstanding, the Committee is of the opinion that it is incumbent upon the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chief Administrative Officer, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to matters of concern regarding the administration of the Organization, including the implementation of decisions already taken by the Assembly.

4. In paragraph 103 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001,[1] the Advisory Committee addressed the need, in developing personnel policy, to carefully consider all the implications that might arise from implementation of a particular personnel policy directive. The Committee is strongly of the opinion that in future such an analysis should precede final action or legislative initiatives on personnel policy.

5. As is indicated below, the Advisory Committee believes that additional policy decisions are required in a number of instances. In view of the impact of this matter on

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the administration of the staff, the Committee recommends that it be taken up by the General Assembly at the first part of its fifty-fifth session.

6. The first policy issue that needs to be addressed is whether the G to P examination is a promotion exercise or a means of recruitment. There has been some confusion in this regard in the past. The G to P examination most directly derives from a recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit in a report on General Service staff of the United Nations and Geneva-based specialized agencies, which was transmitted to the General Assembly in document A/32/327 of 7 November 1977.[2] In paragraph 82 of that report the Inspectors stated

> "They believe that the staff members of the General Service category should be given an opportunity to be promoted to the Professional category by means of competitive examinations. The admission to the examinations should take into account the necessity for equitable geographical distribution. The eligibility requirements for a General Service staff member to be permitted to sit for the examinations could, *inter alia*, include:
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> – to be at the two highest grading levels of the General Service category;
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> – to hold a university degree;
>
> – to have had not less than five years' continuous service in a United Nations organization;
>
> – to have a very good performance report.
>
> Competitive examinations should be arranged on the basis of equality of General Service staff members with outside candidates."

7. In its resolution 33/143 of 20 December 1978, the General Assembly took note with appreciation of the above-mentioned report of the Joint Inspection Unit. In section I, paragraph 1 (g), it stated that:

> "Movement of staff from the General Service category to the Professional category should be limited to the P-1 and P-2 levels and be permitted up to 30 per cent of the total posts available for appointment at those levels, and such recruitment should be conducted exclusively through competitive methods of selection from General Service staff with at least five years' experience and post-secondary educational qualifications".

The foregoing provision gives rise to a problem of interpretation, since "movement of staff" implies an internal exercise. This can involve a lateral move, promotion or even demotion, but it is not a recruitment action; nevertheless, this action is referred to later in the same sentence as "such recruitment". Moreover, in paragraph 10 of the annex to its resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980, the General Assembly stated that at the P-1 and P-2 levels, recruitment should be made as a rule through competitive examinations.

8. It is thus necessary for the General Assembly to decide whether the G to P examination is a recruitment or a promotion exercise; this, in turn, will have a determinative effect on how the necessity for equitable geographical distribution will be recognized.

9. If it is decided that the G to P examination is a recruitment exercise, it would be a decision that there are two entirely separate and distinct categories of staff and career tracks — one essentially locally recruited and the other internationally recruited — and that there can be no internal movement between them. Under those circumstances, the General Assembly may wish to consider whether it is necessary and desirable to continue the G to P examination exercise. It may be far more efficient, as well as more transparent, to conduct recruitment through the national competitive examination, requiring all eligible persons who seek Professional positions to take that examination;[3] as such, they would be automatically subject to geographical requirements. Consideration could be given to allowing an exemption from the age restriction for staff who have served five years or more.

10. On the other hand, if the General Assembly confirms that the G to P examination is a promotion exercise, then a number of other considerations would apply, primarily with regard to the question of equitable geographical distribution. In this connection, paragraph 12 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/54/2) could lead to confusion. The Advisory Committee points out that Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations provides that due regard should be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Geographical considerations are thus an important factor in the recruitment of the staff. Up to now, however, it has been a distinguishing feature of the international civil service that staff undertake their duties without distinction as to their nationality; their conditions of employment, as well as staff regulation 4.2, approved by the General Assembly, reflect this.

11. Under these circumstances, it could be said that the General Assembly, in its resolution 33/143, took into account the necessity of equitable geographical distribution,

as called for by the Joint Inspection Unit (see para. 6 above), when it limited movement of staff from the General Service to the Professional category to 30 per cent of the posts available at the P-1 and P-2 levels. Seen another way, it could also be stated that the fact that up to 30 per cent of available entry-level Professional posts were made available for a group that is almost by definition not geographically balanced was in order to recognize other factors, such as the desirability of maximizing the ability of the Organization to make full use of the capabilities and acquired knowledge and skills of its staff by encouraging the career development of staff as well as fostering gender equality.

12. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with additional information on staff promoted through the G to P examination since 1979, broken down by gender, nationality and representation status (see annex I) and on staff appointed through the national competitive examination since 1974 (see annex II).

13. In conclusion, the Advisory Committee has recommended that the General Assembly provide a policy decision on whether the G to P examination is a recruitment or a promotion exercise. This decision, in turn, could lead to a decision on whether to abolish the G to P examination, with all eligible applicants for Professional posts taking the national competitive examination (see para. 9 above) or to maintain the G to P examination (see paras. 10 and 11 above).

14. If the General Assembly should take decisions on these matters, it may then wish to request the Secretary-General to prepare specific proposals for their implementation. This would be consistent with the procedure outlined by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 103 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.[1] If the G to P examination is to be maintained, these proposals should take into account the possibility of establishing a roster for promotion from year to year and an analysis of the 30 per cent ceiling with options for its revision. The Assembly would also need to indicate the interim arrangements that should be followed pending its consideration of the note by the Secretary-General.

Consultants and individual contractors

15. The Advisory Committee has examined the reports of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat (A/54/164) and on consultants and individual contractors (A/C.5/54/4), which were submitted in accordance with section VIII, paragraphs 3 and 4 respectively, of General Assembly resolution 53/221.

16. The Advisory Committee takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of recommendations by the Board of Auditors on the hiring and use of consultants (A/54/164) and recognizes that with the issuance of the comprehensive guidelines for the use of consultants and the establishment of a roster and arrangements for reporting to the General Assembly, the issues raised by the Board have been addressed. The development of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) will permit improved monitoring of the implementation of the guidelines and improved reporting to the Assembly. The Committee points out, however, that to the extent possible there should be a monitoring mechanism in place to ensure the impartial evaluation of the performance of consultants. In some cases this may require evaluation by a party that was not involved in the selection process.

17. The Advisory Committee welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on consultants and individual contractors (A/C.5/54/4) and the considerable improvement in the quality of the document as compared to previous reports on the subject. It also commends the transparency of the report, which will allow for constructive discussion.

18. The Advisory Committee notes that at Headquarters and other duty stations where Release 3 has been implemented, the use of IMIS in the collection of information on consultants and individual contractors has been particularly valuable. The Committee understands that there have been difficulties in data collection and that the installation of Release 3 at all duty stations, which is scheduled for completion by December 2000, will assist in the process of global compilation and management of data in the future. The Committee points out that the implementation of Release 3 at all duty stations should permit earlier issuance of the report, and encourages the Secretariat to explore the possibility of issuing it in a manner that would permit the Committee to take it into account when it considers the proposed programme budget.

19. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the presentation of expenditures for consultants and individual contractors needs refinement, and, to that end, the method of accounting for costs and their classification between extrabudgetary and regular budget funding should be improved. The Committee is also of the opinion that the presentation in some of the tables requires refinement. For example, the category "non-retired former staff" in table 1 of annex I to the report was found to be confusing; an explanatory footnote would be helpful. Also in table 1, the Committee notes the significant number of consultants and individual contractors for whom there was no information

about level of education and no evaluation of performance. The collection and analysis of this kind of information should be improved. In table 7, the Committee notes a marked difference in the figures for consultants in the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Such an anomaly should be explained in a footnote.

20. As indicated in table 2 and paragraph 10 of the report, although consultants from 158 countries were engaged in 1998, 5 countries accounted for one third of all consultants engaged. Individual contractors were engaged from 91 countries, of which 6 countries accounted for more than half of all engagements. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that, in accordance with section VIII, paragraphs 9 to 11, of General Assembly resolution 53/221, continued efforts should be made to select consultants and individual contractors on a wider geographical basis.

21. The Advisory Committee takes note of the definitions of consultants and individual contractors contained in administrative instruction ST/AI/1999/7. However, in the view of the Committee, the definitions are too broad, and the definition for individual contractors, in particular, includes activities and arrangements that might better be described as outsourcing. The Committee recommends that future reports include a separate table of contractual services, and that more precise definitions be used.

Delegation of authority

22. The Advisory Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on administrative issuances on delegation of authority (A/54/257), which was submitted pursuant to section IV, paragraph 9, of General Assembly resolution 53/221. Pursuant to section IV of the resolution, procedures should be in place to monitor the implementation of the delegation of authority. In the view of the Committee, this should be done throughout the Organization. Moreover, there is an urgent need to carry out an exercise to simplify and streamline the rules for delegation of authority. The Secretariat was unable to assure the Committee as to when this might be achieved.

Amendments to the Staff Regulations

23. The Advisory Committee takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Regulations (A/54/276), which was submitted in accordance with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 52/252 of 8 September 1998. The Committee has no comments to make on the report. In a related matter, the Committee requested but did not receive a clear indication of the prospect of completing the task of simplifying the Staff Regulations.

Post structure of the Secretariat

24. The Advisory Committee has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the post structure of the Secretariat (A/53/955), which was referred to in paragraph 48 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.[1] The Committee has requested information on the post structure of the Secretariat for the biennium 1986-1987, as well as information on extrabudgetary (including support account) posts for all programmes, with the exception of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, from the biennium 1986-1987 to the biennium 1998-1999. In paragraph 55 of its report, the Committee also reiterated its request for information on the number of personnel with permanent contracts assigned to peacekeeping or other field missions, the number of Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General posts in the United Nations and its programmes in 1989 as compared with 1999 and the percentage of permanent and fixed-term contracts in 1989 as compared with 1999. The Committee requests that this information be provided to the Fifth Committee at the first part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/54/7).

[2] The matter has actually been under discussion in the Joint Inspection Unit, the Administrative Management Service and the Advisory Committee since 1971. See, for example, the report of the Advisory Committee contained in document A/9841 of 8 November 1974, paras. 17-23.

[3] Eligible staff currently have the option of taking the national competitive examination.

Annex I

Staff promoted through the G to P examination since 1979 as at August 1999

Nationality	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Range*	*Staff*
Non-member State					
Switzerland	1	0	1	-	0
Total	**1**	**0**	**1**		
Under-represented States					
China	1	0	1	40-55	39
Germany	2	0	2	126-170	124
Indonesia	1	0	1	8-18	7
Japan	1	0	1	250-338	106
Total	**5**	**0**	**5**		
States within the desirable range and below the mid-point					
Antigua and Barbuda	1	0	1	1-14	1
Argentina	1	2	3	16-26	18
Austria	7	3	10	14-24	17
Barbados	1	1	2	1-14	3
Belize	0	1	1	1-14	1
Cyprus	0	1	1	1-14	4
Ecuador	0	1	1	1-14	5
Eritrea	0	1	1	1-14	4
Greece	1	0	1	6-16	10
Grenada	0	1	1	1-14	2
Guinea	0	1	1	1-14	4
Haiti	1	1	2	1-14	4
Malta	1	0	1	1-14	3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1	0	1	1-14	5
Sweden	3	2	5	17-26	19
United States of America	77	24	101	314-425	345
Total	**94**	**39**	**133**		
States within the desirable range and above the mid-point					
Australia	4	0	4	22-32	31
Bahamas	1	0	1	1-14	7
Bangladesh	0	1	1	4-14	10
Belgium	0	2	2	17-26	22
Brazil	1	1	2	25-35	33
Bulgaria	1	0	1	1-14	13

Nationality	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Range*	*Staff*[a]
Egypt	1	0	1	3-14	14
El Salvador	0	1	1	1-14	9
France	6	5	11	85-116	105
Guyana	4	1	5	1-14	14
Ireland	3	3	6	4-14	13
Jamaica	7	3	10	1-14	14
Lebanon	2	0	2	1-14	14
Liberia	1	0	1	1-14	7
Madagascar	0	1	1	1-14	7
Malaysia	1	0	1	4-14	11
Mexico	1	0	1	17-27	23
New Zealand	0	1	1	4-14	12
Nigeria	0	1	1	4-14	13
Singapore	0	1	1	3-14	9
Spain	1	2	3	37-50	44
Sri Lanka	2	2	4	1-14	7
Sudan	0	1	1	2-14	9
Syrian Arab Republic	1	0	1	2-14	8
Tunisia	0	1	1	1-14	10
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	25	8	33	68-92	85
United Republic of Tanzania	1	1	2	2-14	11
Uruguay	0	1	1	2-14	10
Total	**63**	**37**	**100**		
Over-represented States					
Canada	1	0	1	39-53	55
Chile	9	13	22	3-14	32
Ethiopia	4	12	16	2-14	21
India	10	22	32	26-36	42
Pakistan	2	2	4	5-14	19
Peru	2	2	4	3-14	16
Philippines	34	18	52	4-14	61
Thailand	10	11	21	5-14	27
Trinidad and Tobago	9	3	12	1-14	15
Total	**81**	**83**	**164**		
Grand total	**244**	**159**	**403**		

Note: As at 31 March 1999, a total of 166 successful candidates were from 10 over-represented States (Philippines 52, India 31, Chile 23, Thailand 21, Ethiopia 16, Trinidad and Tobago 12, Pakistan 4, Peru 4, Lebanon 2 and Canada 1). As at 30 June 1999, Lebanon was no longer over-represented. The present annex has been modified accordingly.

[a] Total staff subject to geographical distribution.

Annex II

Staff appointed through national competitive examination since 1974 as at August 1999

Nationality	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Armenia	0	5	5
Australia	5	4	9
Bahamas	5	1	6
Belarus	0	2	2
Bhutan	0	3	3
Bolivia	0	1	1
Botswana	1	1	2
Brazil	4	13	17
Burundi	1	3	4
Canada	0	1	1
Cape Verde	0	2	2
Central African Republic	0	4	4
Chile	0	1	1
China	5	1	6
Costa Rica	0	2	2
Croatia	2	2	4
Cuba	2	3	5
Czech Republic	0	4	4
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	0	1	1
Denmark	2	5	7
Dominica	1	1	2
Dominican Republic	0	2	2
Ecuador	1	2	3
El Salvador	3	3	6
Equatorial Guinea	0	1	1
Eritrea	2	3	5
Estonia	2	2	4
France	9	6	15
Gabon	0	1	1
Germany	30	49	79
Greece	1	3	4
Grenada	0	1	1
Haiti	1	0	1
Honduras	0	1	1
Hungary	2	3	5
Iceland	0	5	5
Indonesia	1	3	4
Israel	2	6	8
Italy	17	33	50
Japan	53	40	93

Nationality	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Latvia	2	2	4
Liechtenstein	1	0	1
Lithuania	2	1	3
Luxembourg	1	2	3
Mexico	1	3	4
Mongolia	2	1	3
Namibia	1	5	6
Netherlands	4	9	13
New Zealand	3	2	5
Nicaragua	4	2	6
Norway	8	8	16
Panama	1	2	3
Papua New Guinea	0	4	4
Paraguay	1	1	2
Portugal	1	4	5
Republic of Korea	7	11	18
Romania	1	3	4
Russian Federation	1	7	8
Rwanda	0	4	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	3	1	4
Saint Lucia	1	2	3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0	1	1
Saudi Arabia	1	2	3
Slovakia	0	5	5
South Africa	1	3	4
Spain	9	9	18
Swaziland	1	0	1
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1	2	3
Ukraine	1	5	6
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	0	2	2
United States of America	12	8	20
Venezuela	4	1	5
Viet Nam	1	0	1
Yugoslavia	0	5	5
Expired nationalities [a]	0	3	3
Grand total	**228**	**344**	**572**

Note: The data contained in IMIS relating to successful candidates in the national competitive examination include active staff members as at 1 January 1986. Staff who left the Organization prior to that date are not included in the database, which also does not include staff transferred to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in 1986. A very small number of exams were organized on a pilot basis prior to 1979.

[a] German Democratic Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Czechoslovakia.